

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMCONSUL AMSTERDAM
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: CIVAIR: AIRBUS ECONOMICS/RELIABILITY

REF: PARIS 01349, STATE 005609

1. BELOW ARE FULLER DETAILS ON AIR FRANCE EXPERIENCE
WITH AIRBUS AS LEARNED IN JAN. 19 CONVERSATION WITH
SENIOR OFFICIAL ON AIR FRANCE TECHNICAL STAFF.
2. AIR FRANCE IS "VERY PLEASED" WITH AIRBUS. RELIABILITY
HAS BEEN BETTER THAN NINETY-SEVEN PERCENT. DURING PEAK
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SUMMER SEASON AIR FRANCE HAD NO AIRBUSES IN RESERVE, SO
RELIABILITY WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO CARRIER OPERATIONS.
GE MOTORS MOUNTED ON AIRBUS ARE EXCELLENT, AND THEY
CAN BE OPERATED AT REDUCED SPEED SINCE THEY ARE SLIGHTLY
OVERPOWERED FOR THE AIRCRAFT. DURING SIX MONTH OPERA-
TION NEW YORK-MARTINIQUE ROUTE USING AIRBUS (WHICH
WAS SUSPENDED BECAUSE OF COMPETITION FROM LOW COST

CANADIAN-CARIBBEAN CHARTERS), AIR FRANCE WAS COMPELLED CANCEL ONLY ONE FLIGHT FOR TECHNICAL REASONS. OPERATION ON THAT ROUTE ALSO DEMONSTRATED EASE WITH WHICH AIRBUS COULD BE MAINTAINED AND SERVICED EVEN WHEN DISTANT FROM CARRIER'S MAJOR SUPPLY BASE.

3. PASSENGER REACTION TO AIRBUS HAS BEEN DISTINCTLY FAVORABLE. SPACIOUSNESS OF AIRCRAFT AND IN PARTICULAR CONVENIENCE OF LARGE OVERHEAD LUGGAGE COMPARTMENTS IN CABIN SEEM TO BE ESPECIALLY APPRECIATED BY THE TRAVELING PUBLIC.

4. LOAD FACTORS ON AIRBUS HAVE BEEN GOOD, ESPECIALLY ON ROUTES TO MIDDLE EAST POINTS. AS CONCERNS PROFIT PROJECTIONS, RECENT STUDY CARRIED OUT BY AIR FRANCE ESTIMATES THAT AFTER 1978-79 THE ONLY AIRCRAFT IN ITS FLEET THAT WILL BE MONEYEARNS ARE THE AIRBUS, PARTICULARLY THE B-4 VERSION, AND THE 747.

5. AIR FRANCE HAD SOME PROBLEMS WITH ITS AIRBUSES AT THE OUTSET, AND PARTICULARLY WITH MANUFACTURER SUPPORT. HOWEVER, AIR FRANCE RECEIVED THE FIRST AIRBUSES THAT WERE PRODUCED AND SO IT ENCOUNTERED ITS SHARE OF THE BUGS THAT ACCOMPANY MANY NEW PRODUCTS WHEN THEY FIRST APPEAR ON THE MARKET. (SOURCE NOTED THAT THIS HAS APPLIED EQUALY IN THE PAST TO NEW AIRCRAFT PRODUCED BY US INDUSTRY.) AS OF PRODUCTION AIRBUS NO. 26, HOWEVER, WHICH WAS THE FIRST ONE DELIVERED TO LUFTHANSA, AIRBUS HAS BEEN, IN AIR FRANCE'S OPINION, TROUBLE-FREE. AIR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FRANCE NO LONGER HAS ANY COMPLAINTS ABOUT MANUFACTURER SUPPORT. SOURCE SAID THAT DOCUMENTATION FROM ATLAS GROUP OF EUROPEAN CARRIERS MIGHT APPEAR CONTRADICTORY ON SOME OF ABOVE POINTS, THOUGH HE WAS INCLINED DOWNPLAY THIS AS MERELY REFLECTING ATLAS GROUP'S OWN "LEARNING CURVE" AND SAID THAT MORE RECENT ATLAS GROUP DOCUMENTATION WAS CONSIDERABLY MORE FAVORABLE TO AIRBUS.

6. SOURCE SAID AIR FRANCE WAS ESPECIALLY IMPRESSED BY AUTOMATIC LANDING CAPABILITY (CAT 3A) OF AIRBUS, WHICH WAS BEST PERFORMANCE AIR FRANCE HAD EVER SEEN. AIR FRANCE DOES NOT UTILIZE AUTOMATIC LANDING CAPABILITY ON REGULAR BASIS SOLELY BECAUSE NOT ENOUGH OF ITS PILOTS HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN THIS PROCEDURE, BUT WHEN PILOT TRAINING IS FARTHER ADVANCED AIR FRANCE PLANS OPERATE ITS AIRBUSES ON CAT 3A PROCEDURES AS IS ALREADY STANDARD PRACTICE BY AIR INTER ON ITS DOMESTIC NETWORK.

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Message Attributes

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